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# The Benefits of Interpersonal Regulatory Fit for Individual Goal Pursuit

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The present work examines whether individual goal pursuit is influenced by advice and suggestions from interaction partners whose regulatory orientation is perceived to fit (vs. not fit) the individual's orientation. We sought to investigate whether such *interpersonal* regulatory fit yields motivational consequences for goal pursuit that parallel those of *intrapersonal* regulatory fit. Furthermore, we investigated whether these effects occur in a symmetrical fashion for promotion- and prevention-oriented individuals. The results of 6 experiments revealed that promotion-oriented individuals profit from interpersonal regulatory fit, experiencing motivational benefits when receiving goal-relevant advice from promotion-oriented interaction partners; however, prevention-oriented individuals do not profit from prevention-oriented interaction partners. These findings support the proposal that regulatory fit can fruitfully be examined as an interpersonal phenomenon, highlighting the role that interaction partners may play in the pursuit of personal goals.

**Keywords:** regulatory focus, interpersonal regulatory fit, goals, interpersonal processes, instrumentality

Goals are fundamental end states that energize and direct behavior, whether they constitute ambitious plans of life or simple everyday pursuits. As such, goals give meaning to existence. During the course of goal pursuit, people often interact with partners, friends, relatives, or coworkers who may influence their goal accomplishment. People speak with others about their plans, asking them for advice about how best to approach their goals. Following such interactions, sometimes people feel more energized and motivated to achieve their goals; on other occasions they feel discouraged and lose interest in their goals. The present research explores the interpersonal properties of goal pursuit, investigating the conditions under which others' advice and suggestions motivate people to reach their goals.

Regulatory focus theory distinguishes between two regulatory orientations that people may adopt to accomplish their goals (Higgins, 1997): Promotion orientation entails motivation to attain nurturance, whereas prevention orientation entails motivation to attain security. When people pursue goals in a manner that fits their regulatory orientation, they experience *regulatory fit* (Higgins, 2000). Regulatory fit causes people to "feel right" about what they are doing, with several motivational benefits for goal pursuit. To date, regulatory fit has been studied primarily from an *intrapersonal* perspective, examining motivational benefits within the individual; the possibility that people may experience motivational benefits from *interpersonal* regulatory processes has been largely neglected.

On the basis of the claim that interaction partners may exert considerable influence on individual goal pursuit, the present research aims to examine the interpersonal components of regulatory fit. We propose that regulatory fit and its motivational benefits will be experienced when two individuals share the same regulatory orientation. We also test two competing hypotheses regarding the nature of such influence. The symmetrical fit hypothesis predicts that the consequences of interpersonal regulatory fit will be parallel for promotion-oriented individuals and prevention-oriented individuals. In contrast, the asymmetrical fit hypothesis predicts that the benefits of interpersonal regulatory fit will be evident for promotion-oriented individuals but not for prevention-oriented individuals.

## Regulatory Focus Theory

Regulatory focus theory distinguishes between two kinds of self-regulatory systems that serve distinct survival functions (Higgins, 1997). *Promotion focus* is concerned with obtaining nurturance and underlies individuals' higher level needs for advancement, accomplishment, and aspiration (i.e., concern with the presence vs. absence of positive outcomes). *Prevention focus* is concerned with obtaining security and underlies individuals' higher level needs for protection, safety, and responsibility (i.e., concern with the presence vs. absence of negative outcomes).

The two orientations are associated with different kinds of goals and strategic tendencies. Promotion focus is associated with the pursuit of ideal self attributes (i.e., attributes that an individual ideally would like to possess), whereas prevention focus is associated with the pursuit of ought self attributes (i.e., attributes that an individual believes he or she ought to possess; see e.g., Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Idson & Higgins, 2000; Molden & Higgins, 2004). Promotion orientation is associated with a strategic inclination to accomplish "hits" (i.e., presence of accomplishment) and avoid "misses" (i.e., absence of accomplishment). Promotion-oriented people are eager to attain gains. In contrast, prevention orientation is associated with a strategic inclination to attain "correct rejections" (i.e., absence of failure) and avoid "false

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alarms" (i.e., presence of failure). Prevention-oriented people are vigilant to assure safety and nonloss (e.g., Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Förster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998).

Regulatory foci have also been related to different kinds of processing styles. Promotion focus, a focus on nurturance, may signal that the environment is benign and that the individual may adopt a riskier, more explorative processing style. Promotion-oriented individuals tend to engage in a global processing style because they want to go beyond the given information to ensure advancement (Förster & Higgins, 2005). On the contrary, prevention focus, a focus on security, may signal that the environment is prospectively threatening and that the individual may adopt a risk-averse, vigilant processing style. Prevention-oriented individuals tend to use a local processing style because they need to concentrate on their concrete surrounding to maintain security. They need to screen the environment to identify and eliminate the obstacles to fulfill their goal (Förster & Higgins, 2005). Consistent with the explorative processing style, there is convergent evidence that promotion focus leads to creativity, generation, and consideration of alternative hypotheses while facing a task and openness to possible changes, whereas prevention focus leads to rigidity, closeness, adherence to concrete and specific task-relevant information, and stability (Friedman & Förster, 2001; Liberman, Idson, Camacho, & Higgins, 1999; Liberman, Molden, Idson, & Higgins, 2001).

### Interpersonal Regulatory Fit and Individual Goal Pursuit

People experience regulatory fit when they pursue a goal in a manner that sustains their regulatory orientation (Higgins, 2000). For example, promotion-oriented individuals experience fit when they pursue goals in an eager manner, whereas prevention-oriented individuals experience fit when they pursue goals in a careful and vigilant manner. Pursuing goals under conditions of regulatory fit causes people to "feel right" about what they are doing, with several motivational benefits. For example, under conditions of fit, people experience stronger engagement and motivation in goal pursuit (Förster et al., 1998), they perform better (Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998), they enjoy goal pursuit more (Freitas & Higgins, 2002), and they place greater value on their goals (Higgins, Idson, Freitas, Spiegel, & Molden, 2003). Thus, regulatory fit creates value, causing people to feel right about what they are doing and transferring this positive property to goal pursuit independent of success versus failure.

Importantly, people do not necessarily pursue goals in isolation. People frequently pursue goals in the presence of interaction partners who have the potential to facilitate versus impede their goal pursuits (Kelley, 1983; Kelley et al., 2003). After interacting with others, people might feel differently toward the goal; they might feel energized and motivated, or they might lose interest and decide to dedicate less effort. As such, romantic partners, friends, relatives, or coworkers may have a great impact on the individual goal pursuit. How might interaction partners' advice and suggestions affect the manner in which individuals think and feel about their goals? What variables shape whether a given interaction facilitates versus impedes goal pursuit?

According to regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997), people tend to approach goals with a predominant regulatory orientation—with either promotion orientation or prevention orientation.

We suggest that when people interact with one another during goal pursuit activities, the individual's orientation interacts with the interaction partner's orientation, such that the combination of the two persons' orientations shapes the individual's approach to goals. Specifically, we suggest that individuals experience *interpersonal regulatory fit* when they perceive an interaction partner to approach goal pursuit activities with a regulatory orientation that matches the individual's own regulatory orientation. Interpersonal regulatory fit may thus yield motivational benefits that parallel those observed for individual regulatory fit, including "feeling right" about what one is doing, experiencing enhanced motivation toward the goal, and exhibiting greater enjoyment of goal pursuit activities (e.g., Förster et al., 1998; Higgins et al., 2003). Furthermore, people may recognize that a given interaction partner facilitates their activities, and accordingly they may evaluate the partner as instrumental for their goal pursuit.

### Two Competing Hypotheses

Do people experience fit when pursuing personal goals with the advice and support of partners who are perceived to match their orientation? And if so, are the benefits of interpersonal fit equally evident for individuals who are promotion oriented versus prevention oriented? The existing literature gives rise to two competing hypotheses. According to a straightforward *symmetrical interpersonal fit hypothesis*, parallel interpersonal benefits should be evident for promotion- and prevention-oriented individuals. As previously illustrated, the intrapersonal regulatory fit literature has shown that promotion-oriented individuals experience fit when they pursue activities in an eager, promotion-oriented manner, and prevention-oriented individuals experience fit when they pursue activities in a vigilant, prevention-oriented manner. In a similar vein, from an interpersonal point of view, people should experience interpersonal fit when they receive input from interaction partners that fits and reinforces their own regulatory orientation. Promotion-oriented interaction partners are likely to suggest promotion strategies and approaches to goals (e.g., eagerness), whereas prevention-oriented interaction partners are likely to suggest prevention strategies and approaches (e.g., vigilance). Consequently, promotion-oriented individuals should feel right about what they are doing and should experience increased motivation and enjoyment for the goal when perceiving support from a promotion-oriented partner, whereas prevention-oriented individuals should feel right and experience motivational benefits when perceiving support from a prevention-oriented partner.

In contrast, an *asymmetrical interpersonal fit hypothesis* predicts that interpersonal benefits should be evident for promotion-oriented individuals but not for prevention-oriented individuals. Promotion-oriented individuals should experience interpersonal regulatory fit because they should easily detect the similarities between their approach to goals and the suggestions of a promotion-oriented partner, whereas prevention-oriented individuals should fail to recognize the similarities and the fit. The lack of recognition of fit, in turn, should impair the possibility of experiencing the motivational benefits of interpersonal support. There are at least two reasons to support this idea.

First, regulatory focus should affect the way people approach and react to interpersonal support. When pursuing a goal, promotion-oriented individuals perceive the situation as an opportunity for ad-

vancement, and they are open to any information that may help them to ensure possible gains. Promotion-oriented individuals may perceive interpersonal assistance as an opportunity to acquire information that can help them to reach their goal. Therefore, they should be likely to seek advice from others, and they should be receptive to such advice. The openness to interpersonal support should enable them to detect similarities between their approach to goals and the advice given by a promotion-oriented partner. On the contrary, while pursuing a goal, prevention-oriented individuals perceive the situation as a possible threat, and they need to focus on the specific features of a task in order to maintain security, insulating themselves from new information (Förster & Higgins, 2005). Prevention-oriented individuals may be so exclusively focused on their own goals that they fail to recognize the potential benefits of an external source of information, such as interpersonal advice and assistance. Thus, prevention-oriented individuals should be less prone to seek interpersonal assistance and should be less receptive to such assistance once it is obtained. This absence of interest in interpersonal support, in turn, should limit and interfere with the recognition of the similarities between their own approach to goals and the suggestions provided by a prevention-oriented partner.

Second, in general, the global processing style linked to promotion orientation should facilitate the perception of similarities, whereas the local processing style of prevention orientation should facilitate the perception of dissimilarities (Förster, 2009; Förster, Liberman, & Kuschel, 2008). Thus, in any circumstance, promotion-oriented individuals might be especially prone to detect similarities when judging a social object, enabling the possibility of experiencing interpersonal fit. A recent examination (Righetti, Finkel, & Eastwick, 2011) provides support for this idea, in that participants' promotion orientation, but not prevention orientation, predicted perceived similarity to potential partners in a speed dating event.

Although numerous experiments have investigated regulatory fit from an intrapersonal perspective, fewer experiments have examined interpersonal regulatory processes. Prior work has examined the impact of significant other representations on individual goal pursuit (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003; Shah, 2003), the role that close partners may play in promoting versus inhibiting each person's pursuit of the ideal self (Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist, & Whitton, 1999; Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, & Finkel, 2009), and the positive impact of promotion goal support for dating partners and of both promotion and prevention goal support for marital partners on couple well-being (Molden, Lucas, Finkel, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2009). In addition, prior work has examined the impact of victim–perpetrator regulatory fit on the forgiveness process, revealing that whereas a perpetrator's promotion-framed repentance enhances promotion-oriented victims' forgiveness, fit between prevention-framed repentance and victim prevention orientation less reliably enhances forgiveness (Santelli, Struthers, & Eaton, 2009). To our knowledge, only one study has investigated interpersonal regulatory fit in the context of goal pursuit: In indirect support of our asymmetrical fit hypothesis, Righetti, Rusbult, and Finkenauer (2010) discovered that when both the individual and his or her close partner were promotion oriented, the individual exhibited greater movement toward promotion-oriented goals; parallel effects were not evident for prevention orientation. Unfortunately, this work examined the influence of interpersonal regulatory fit in the context of purely promotion-oriented goal pursuits and failed to examine the motivational underpinnings of fit (e.g., "rightness," motivation, enjoyment).

## Research Overview

The present research examines the effects of interpersonal regulatory fit on individual goal pursuit, examining situations in which people seek to accomplish goals with the support of interaction partners. We suggest that regulatory fit can be conceptualized as an interpersonal phenomenon—that is, we suggest that interaction partners may facilitate versus impede individual goal accomplishment via their impact on motivational phenomena such as enjoyment and feeling right about goal pursuits. We advance competing hypotheses about the nature of such influence. The symmetrical fit hypothesis predicts that (a) among promotion-oriented individuals, a promotion-oriented interaction partner will yield greater motivational benefits than a prevention-oriented partner and that (b) among prevention-oriented individuals, a prevention-oriented partner will yield greater motivational benefits than a promotion-oriented partner. In contrast, on the basis of work suggesting that prevention-oriented individuals may be less receptive to social influence and less apt to profit from interpersonal fit, the asymmetrical fit hypothesis predicts that (a) among promotion-oriented individuals, a promotion-oriented partner will yield greater motivational benefits than a prevention-oriented partner but that (b) among prevention-oriented individuals, whether a partner is promotion versus prevention oriented will yield largely indistinguishable motivational effects.

We sought to investigate these hypotheses in six experiments, across which we employed diverse and complementary methods. For example, in some experiments we measured individual regulatory orientation, and in others we manipulated individual regulatory orientation. In like manner, in some experiments we measured the interaction partner's regulatory orientation, and in others we manipulated the partner's regulatory orientation. Moreover, we examined whether promotion- and prevention-oriented partners differed in liking, relational intimacy, intelligence (in all experiments), competence, successfulness, and productivity (Experiment 6). We also replicated our main analyses controlling for these variables to ensure that our findings were not attributable to these alternative constructs.

In Experiment 1, we examined whether individuals recognize interpersonal fit, asking people to think of a close other who was instrumental (vs. noninstrumental) in their goal pursuit. We explored whether partners who are perceived to have the same regulatory orientation as the individual are perceived as more instrumental. In Experiment 2, we examined whether interpersonal fit creates value by making people feel right about what they are doing and whether this positive property is transferred to the goal pursuit *per se*. We explored whether interpersonal fit yields several motivational benefits, including perceived partner instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment. Given that regulatory orientation can vary not only across individuals (e.g., some individuals are more prevention oriented than others) but also across situations (e.g., some situational cues trigger prevention orientation), in this experiment we experimentally manipulated regulatory orientation. To rule out the possibility that the goals examined in the previous experiments favored promotion orientation over prevention orientation, in Experiment 3 we used a laboratory task that deliberately provided the opportunity for applying either promotion or prevention strategies. Given that Experiments 1–3 examined interpersonal regulatory fit in the laboratory and tested a student population, in Experiment 4 we examined the phenomenon in the context of ongoing relationships (married couples), using both partners' reports of their own promotion orientation and prevention ori-



entation. Finally, in Experiments 5 and 6 we explored possible reasons for the asymmetrical effects of interpersonal regulatory fit. We examined whether promotion- and prevention-oriented individuals differ in their approach to interpersonal suggestions and in their judgment of perceived regulatory similarity (i.e., the perception of similarities between their approach to goals and the suggestions provided by a promotion- or prevention-oriented partner).

## Experiment 1

In Experiment 1 we investigated the link between interpersonal regulatory fit and the instrumentality of an interaction partner, examining whether interpersonal fit is greater for partners who are perceived to be instrumental for individual goal pursuit. We manipulated the consequences of fit (instrumental vs. noninstrumental partner) and assessed the individual's and the partner's regulatory orientations. This first exploratory investigation aimed to test (a) whether participants identify partners who fit their orientation in the instrumental condition but not in the noninstrumental condition and (b) whether this association is evident for both promotion- and prevention-oriented individuals.

## Method

**Participants.** Participants were 89 individuals, 61 women and 28 men. They were recruited on the campus of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and were paid €3.50 for taking part in the experiment. Participants were 20.25 years old, on average ( $SD = 2.39$ ).

**Measures and procedure.** Upon participants' arrival at the laboratory, we randomly assigned them to one of two experimental conditions (instrumental vs. noninstrumental partner). Participants sat in separate cubicles facing computer screens that were used to present the experiment and register the data. We asked participants to complete the Lockwood, Jordan, and Kunda (2002) Promotion/Prevention Scale to measure their regulatory orientation (18 items; e.g., for promotion, "I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations," and for prevention, "I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life"; 0 = *do not agree at all*, 8 = *agree completely*;  $\alpha_s = .76$  for promotion and  $.86$  for prevention).<sup>1</sup> Following established procedures, we developed a measure of participants' predominant orientation by calculating the difference between participants' scores on the two scales (Promotion subscale score minus Prevention subscale score; e.g., Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Higgins et al., 2001; Lockwood et al., 2002). Thus, positive scores indicate a predominant promotion orientation, and negative scores indicate a predominant prevention orientation.<sup>2</sup>

We informed participants that the experiment investigated how other people may influence goal accomplishment. We asked them to describe three self-relevant goals. For each goal, we asked participants to think of a partner who was either instrumental, useful, and helpful to achieving each particular goal (instrumental partner) or noninstrumental, obstructive, and unhelpful to achieving each goal (noninstrumental partner). For each goal, participants rated partner regulatory orientation using eight items of the Lockwood et al. (2002) scale (e.g., for promotion, "He or she often thinks about how he or she will achieve personal or professional success," and for prevention, "He or she frequently thinks about

how he or she can prevent failures in his or her life"; 0 = *do not agree at all*, 6 = *agree completely*;  $\alpha_s = .91$  for promotion and  $.77$  for prevention). We calculated the partner's predominant orientation by computing the difference between scores on the two

<sup>1</sup> The choice of this instrument is not without controversy. Urging caution in the interpretation of findings for the Lockwood et al. (2002) instrument, Summerville and Roese (2008) suggested that this instrument "functions like a measure of approach and avoidance (the BIS/BAS [Behavioral Inhibition Scale/Behavioral Activation Scale])" (Carver & White, 1994). We nevertheless employed the Lockwood et al. instrument because (a) it has good face validity, with items that are clearly linked to the theoretical definitions of promotion and prevention orientation; (b) it has good psychometric properties, with demonstrated reliability and validity; and (c) it is one of the most frequently employed means of assessing dispositional regulatory orientation (e.g., Brebels & De Cremer, 2008; Keller & Bless, 2006; Lockwood, Marshall, & Sadler, 2005; McGregor, Gailliot, Vaquez, & Nash, 2007; Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008; Oyserman, Uskul, Yoder, Nesse, & Williams, 2007). Two additional points are relevant to the Summerville and Roese cautionary note: (d) In prior work we have found that associations with promotion and prevention as assessed using the Lockwood et al. instrument are not attributable to approach or avoidance tendencies (BIS/BAS scores; Righetti et al., 2010); and importantly, (e) the existence of moderate associations of promotion and prevention with approach or avoidance and/or positive versus negative affect should not be regarded as problematic, but rather as inherent properties of these constructs.

Promotion orientation has a positive outcome focus (gain vs. nongain) that is associated with a predilection for self-regulatory forms involving approach, whereas prevention orientation has a negative outcome focus (loss vs. nonloss) that is associated with a predilection for self-regulatory forms involving avoidance (Förster et al., 1998, 2001; Higgins et al., 1994; Shah et al., 1998). Moreover, promotion shares with approach—and prevention shares with avoidance—common sorts of cortical activity, further highlighting the inherent association between these constructs (Amodio, Shah, Sigelman, Brazy, & Harmon-Jones, 2004). Thus, on the basis of existing research and theory, it would not be surprising if empirical findings were to reveal moderate associations of promotion/prevention with approach/avoidance; yet, the existence of such associations should not be regarded as problematic for regulatory focus theory.

Similarly, although promotion and prevention orientation are argued to be orthogonal to positive and negative affect, this is not necessarily so. The anticipated pleasure of gain (anticipated success in promotion focus) is greater than the anticipated pleasure of nonloss (anticipated success in prevention focus), whereas the anticipated pain of loss (anticipated failure in prevention focus) is greater than the anticipated pain of nongain (promotion focus; Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000; Idson et al., 2004; Liberman, Idson, & Higgins, 2005). Thus, on the basis of existing research and theory, it is not surprising that (a) promotion orientation is associated with positive affect, in that promotion-oriented people confront the anticipation of a great pleasure (gain) versus a mild pain (nongain), whereas (b) prevention orientation is associated with negative affect, in that prevention-oriented individuals confront the anticipation of a great pain (loss) versus a mild pleasure (nonloss).

<sup>2</sup> The use of difference scores is a common approach for the data analyses of regulatory orientation questionnaires (e.g., Brebels & De Cremer, 2008; Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Fransen, Fennis, Pruyn, & Vohs, 2011; Higgins et al., 2001; Keller, & Bless, 2006; Lockwood et al., 2002; Santelli et al., 2009). In our experiments, we decided to use the difference scores approach because, from a theoretical point of view, regardless of the strength of each orientation, it is the relative strength that determines, across situations, the sensitivity to promotion or prevention suggestions. For example, if an individual is high in both promotion and

subscales (Promotion subscale score minus Prevention subscale score; again, positive scores indicate predominant promotion orientation, and negative scores indicate predominant prevention orientation). Finally, using 7-point scales (0 = *not at all*, 6 = *extremely*), participants rated partner liking (one item; “How much do you like this person?”), partner closeness (one item; “How close are you with this person?”), and partner intelligence (one item; “How intelligent is this person?”). We developed a single measure of each partner construct (e.g., partner regulatory orientation, partner liking) by averaging relevant scores across the three goals described by a given participant.

In addition, participants described the type of relationship they had with each partner and reported the duration of their relationship with each partner. Participants most often described interactions with family members (35%), followed by those with friends (35%), romantic partners (15%), other types of relationships (10%), and coworkers (5%). On average participants had been involved with their partners for 9.53 years ( $SD = 4.61$ ).

## Results and Discussion

**Key findings.** To test our hypothesis, we regressed partner regulatory orientation simultaneously onto participant regulatory orientation, partner instrumentality (1 = instrumental partner, -1 = noninstrumental partner), and the interaction of these variables. This analysis revealed a significant main effect of instrumentality ( $\beta = .33, p < .001$ )—partners were described as exhibiting greater promotion orientation in the instrumental condition than in the noninstrumental condition. In addition, the interaction of instrumentality with participant orientation was significant ( $\beta = .25, p = .012$ ). We performed simple slope analyses to examine the nature of this interaction (see Figure 1). The effect of instrumentality was significant among promotion-oriented participants (1  $SD$  above the mean of participant regulatory orientation scores;  $\beta = .58, p < .001$ ), whereas the effect of instrumentality was not significant among prevention-oriented participants (1  $SD$  below mean regulatory orientation;  $\beta = .08, p = .582$ ).

**Auxiliary analyses.** To examine whether partner regulatory orientation was associated with partner liking, closeness, and intelligence, we performed correlation analyses. Participants liked promotion-oriented partners more ( $r = .30, p = .005$ ) and rated them as more intelligent ( $r = .24, p = .023$ ) than prevention-oriented partners. On the contrary, they did not feel closer to promotion- or prevention-oriented partners ( $r = .17, p = .101$ ). To test whether our key findings were evident also when controlling for liking, closeness, or intelligence, we replicated our main analyses controlling for those three variables and their interactions with the moderating variables (Hull, Tedlie, & Lehn, 1992). All

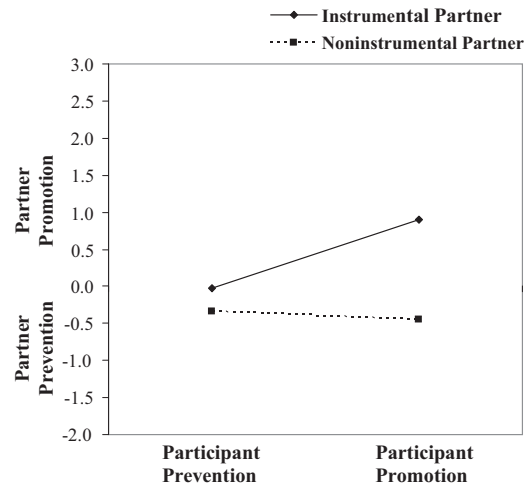


Figure 1. Partner regulatory orientation as a function of participant regulatory orientation and partner instrumentality, Experiment 1.

the interaction effects between participant regulatory orientation and partner instrumentality remained significant ( $\beta$ s ranged from .24 to .29, all  $p$ s ranged from .021 to .005).

This experiment provides preliminary support for the asymmetrical fit hypothesis. Promotion-oriented individuals described their interaction partners as more promotion-oriented when asked to describe instrumental interaction partners than when asked to describe noninstrumental partners. In contrast, prevention-oriented individuals' descriptions of their partners' regulatory orientations did not differ significantly in the instrumental versus noninstrumental conditions. These results are not attributable to differences between instrumental and noninstrumental interaction partners in average liking, closeness, or intelligence.

## Experiment 2

In Experiment 2 we aimed to determine whether interpersonal fit also yields broader benefits, including the motivational benefits that have been observed for intrapersonal fit. Given that individual regulatory orientation may vary not only across individuals but also across situations, in Experiment 2 we manipulated individual regulatory orientation (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented participant) and assessed the partner's regulatory orientation as well as four motivational consequences of interpersonal fit. Specifically, we sought to replicate Experiment 1 by examining whether interpersonal fit is beneficial for promotion-oriented individuals but not for prevention-oriented individuals and whether the benefits of interpersonal fit are evident for perceived partner instrumentality. Extending Experiment 1, Experiment 2 examined whether interpersonal fit yields broader motivational benefits for goal accomplishment, including feeling right, experiencing strong motivation, and exhibiting greater enjoyment.

## Method

**Participants.** Participants were 91 individuals, 62 women and 29 men. They were recruited on the campus of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and were paid €2.50 for taking part in the

prevention, but higher in prevention, and receives promotion suggestions, he or she is unlikely to experience fit, because he or she may not be able to ignore the high prevention concerns. To ensure that our findings were also reliable when considering the Promotion and Prevention subscales separately, we replicated all analyses using the two different scales separately. Results revealed that when we considered only the Promotion subscale, 15 of the 19 original (using the difference score approach) interactions remained significant or marginally significant. Only one of 19 interactions was significant for prevention orientation.

experiment. Participants were 21.46 years old, on average ( $SD = 5.50$ ).

**Measures and procedure.** Upon participants' arrival at the laboratory, we randomly assigned them to one of two experimental conditions (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented participant). Participants sat in separate cubicles facing computers. First, they reported the name of a close partner and answered some questions about this person. As in Experiment 1, they rated partner liking, closeness, intelligence, as well as partner regulatory orientation ( $\alpha s = .86$  for promotion and  $.74$  for prevention). Subsequently, we manipulated participant regulatory orientation using a technique developed by Friedman and Förster (2001). Half of the participants—those in the promotion-oriented participant condition—helped a mouse who was trapped inside a maze find its way out of the maze to reach a piece of cheese that lay outside of the maze. This manipulation induces promotion orientation, in that attempting to reach the cheese represents nurturance seeking. The other half of the participants—those in the prevention-oriented participant condition—helped a mouse who was trapped inside a maze to find its way out of the maze to reach a nest, thereby escaping a flying owl that was ready to fly down and capture the mouse. This manipulation induces prevention orientation, in that attempting to reach the nest represents security seeking.

All participants completed this task successfully. Then we asked participants, all of whom were students, to think about one of their major goals in life, namely, getting their degree. We selected this goal because it was the most frequently mentioned goal in Experiment 1. In relation to this goal, participants were asked to report the impact of the close other's advice and suggestions in the pursuit of this goal. Specifically, they rated instrumentality of the partner (three items; "\_\_\_\_\_ would be really instrumental and helpful for the accomplishment of this goal";  $\alpha = .87$ ), feeling right (three items; "I would feel right about what to do to accomplish this goal after receiving \_\_\_\_\_'s suggestions and advice";  $\alpha = .76$ ), motivation (three items; "With his suggestions and advice \_\_\_\_\_ would be really able to motivate me in accomplishing this goal";  $\alpha = .86$ ), and enjoyment (three items; "I would enjoy the pursuit of this goal more after receiving \_\_\_\_\_'s advice and suggestions";  $\alpha = .84$ ).

Participants also described their relationships with their partners. Participants most often described interactions with friends (42%), followed by those with family members (34%), romantic partners (12%), other types of relationships (10%), and coworkers (2%). On average, participants had been involved with their partners for 4.75 years ( $SD = 7.60$ ).

## Results and Discussion

**Key findings.** To test our hypothesis, we regressed each of our four criteria, in turn, simultaneously onto participant regulatory orientation condition (1 = promotion orientation,  $-1$  = prevention orientation), partner regulatory orientation, and the interaction of these variables. These analyses revealed significant interactions of participant regulatory orientation condition with partner regulatory orientation for partner instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\beta s = .33, .26, .27$ , and  $.28$ , all  $p s$  ranged from  $.014$  to  $<.001$ ).

We performed simple slope analyses to examine the nature of these interactions (see Figure 2, which displays the interaction

effect for all four criteria). The effect of partner orientation was significant in the participant promotion orientation condition for partner instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\beta s = .49, .34, .43$ , and  $.48$ , all  $p s$  ranged from  $.021$  to  $<.001$ ). In contrast, the effect of partner orientation was not significant within the participant prevention orientation condition for any of the four criteria ( $\beta s$  ranged from  $-.18$  to  $-.07$ , all  $p s$  ranged from  $.212$  to  $.623$ ).

**Auxiliary analyses.** To examine whether partner regulatory orientation was associated with partner liking, closeness, and intelligence, we performed correlation analyses. Participants tended to rate promotion-oriented partners as more intelligent ( $r = .18$ ,  $p = .084$ ) than prevention-oriented partners. They did not like promotion-oriented partners more or feel closer to them than to prevention-oriented partners ( $r s = .12$  and  $.00$ ,  $p s = .247$  and  $.989$ ). To test whether our key findings were evident also when controlling for liking, closeness, or intelligence, we replicated our main analyses controlling for those three variables and their interactions with the moderating variables. All the interaction effects between participant regulatory orientation and partner instrumentality remained significant or marginally significant ( $\beta s$  ranged from  $.16$  to  $.33$ , all  $p s$  ranged from  $.099$  to  $<.001$ ) except for feeling right and motivation, which became nonsignificant when controlling for intelligence ( $\beta s = .14$  and  $.15$ ,  $p s = .174$  and  $.141$ ).

Experiment 2 replicated the asymmetrical fit finding observed in Experiment 1: Promotion-oriented individuals reported greater motivational benefits as a result of perceiving an interaction with promotion-oriented interaction partners than as a result of an interaction with prevention-oriented partners. In contrast, the motivational effects of partner orientation were not significant among prevention-oriented individuals. Also, the observed effects of advice and suggestions from interaction partners were evident not only for perceived partner instrumentality but also for variables that have been extensively studied in the intrapersonal fit literature—feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment.

## Experiment 3

The results of the previous experiments revealed support for the asymmetrical fit hypothesis, in that the benefits of fit were evident for promotion-oriented individuals but not for prevention-oriented individuals. However, it is possible that the goals we examined in these experiments favored the asymmetrical fit hypothesis, examining goals that are more relevant for promotion-oriented individuals than for prevention-oriented individuals. Specifically, it is possible that we observed asymmetric effects of interpersonal regulatory fit merely because the goals we examined in Experiments 1 and 2 stimulated ideal self goals rather than ought self goals. To reduce the potential influence of task on interpersonal regulatory fit and thereby rule out this possibility, Experiment 3 used a laboratory task that was deliberately designed to include the possibility of both promotion and prevention regulatory strategies.

Promotion-oriented people tend to prefer risky strategies of judgment and choice and tend to select gambles, products, and form impressions in a way that maximizes the potential for gain, even if this means risking significant losses. In contrast, prevention-oriented people tend to prefer conservative strategies of judgment and choice. They approach gambles, products, and form impressions in a way that maximizes security from losses, even if

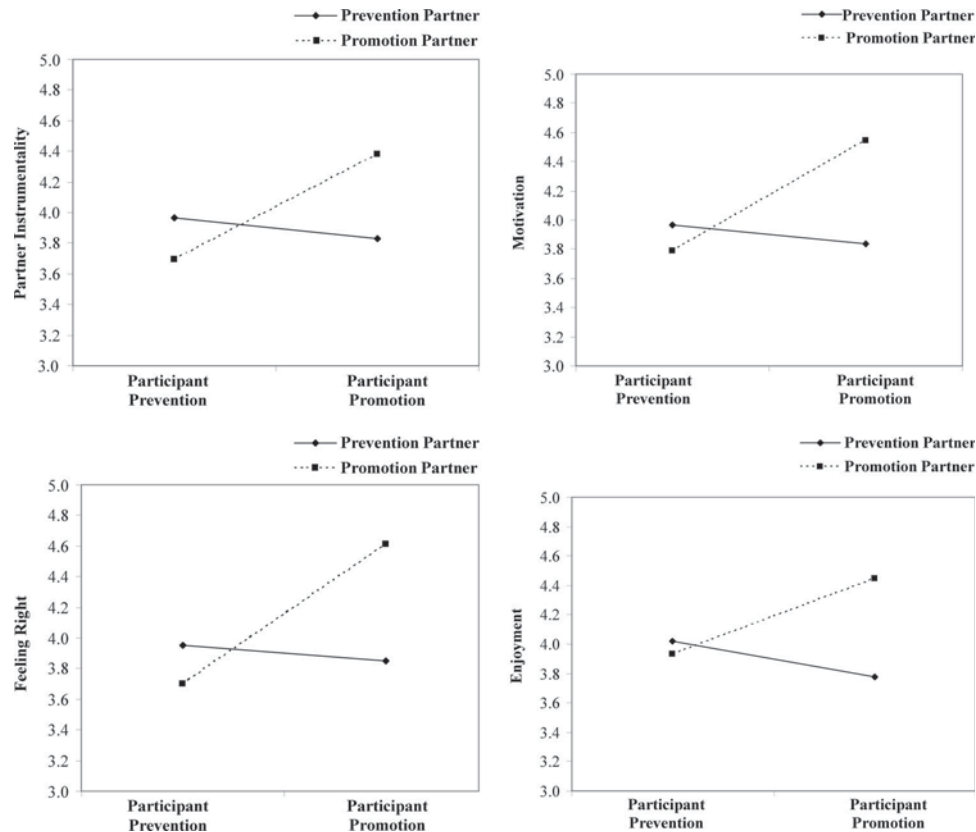


Figure 2. Partner instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment as a function of participant regulatory orientation and partner regulatory orientation, Experiment 2.

this means missing opportunities for significant gains (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins et al., 2001; Liberman et al., 2001; Molden & Higgins, 2004; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999). In the present experiment, we used a task that participants could perform using either (a) risky strategies oriented toward attaining gains, at the risk of important losses (i.e., promotion oriented), or (b) conservative strategies oriented toward protecting present circumstances, but with little or no potential for important gains (i.e., prevention oriented). In this experiment we manipulated partner regulatory orientation (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented partner) through a theory-based description of a typical promotion- and prevention-oriented interaction partner and assessed the participant's regulatory orientation as well as four possible consequences of interpersonal fit.

## Method

**Participants.** Participants were 84 individuals, 54 women and 30 men. They were recruited on the campus of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and were paid €3.50 for taking part in the experiment. Participants were 20.70 years old, on average ( $SD = 2.73$ ). The data for three participants were excluded from the analyses because their responses were judged to be suspicious—for example, they completed the questionnaire too quickly or were distracted during the task (e.g., they talked on their mobile telephones during the task).

**Measures and procedure.** Upon participants' arrival at the laboratory, we randomly assigned them to one of two experimental conditions (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented partner). Participants sat in separate cubicles facing computers. First, participants completed the Lockwood et al. (2002) Promotion/Prevention Scale ( $\alpha_s = .84$  for promotion and .80 for prevention); their predominant orientation was calculated by computing the difference between scores on the Promotion and Prevention subscales. To manipulate partner regulatory orientation, we developed theory-based descriptions of promotion- and prevention-oriented interaction partners. In the promotion-oriented partner condition participants were asked to read the following:

Think about a partner (a romantic partner, a friend, a coworker, or a relative) who embraces the opportunities of life and eagerly tries to accomplish his or her goals. He or she is very concerned about his or her dreams and aspirations. This person always seems enthusiastic about new ideas and often acts in an impulsive manner in order to get what he or she wants. This person often takes risks and is not worried about making mistakes. This person readily makes decisions and performs tasks at the expense of being accurate because he or she is eager to obtain what he or she wants. Please think about this portrayal for a few minutes, and identify a person who is close to you and who fits this description.

In the prevention-oriented partner condition participants were asked to read the following:



Think about a partner (a romantic partner, a friend, a coworker, or a relative) who is always concerned not to make mistakes and tries to accomplish his or her goals in a prudent way. He or she is very concerned about his or her responsibilities and obligations. This person is careful and considerate and acts in a safe manner because he or she is worried about making mistakes. This person does not take risks and always sees the possible costs and limitations of an action. This person takes decisions seriously and accurately performs tasks to avoid mistakes. Please think about this portrayal for a few minutes, and identify a person who is close to you and who fits this description.

After reporting the name of a suitable interaction partner, they answered some questions about him or her (liking, closeness, and intelligence). Then we informed participants that they were going to take part in a judgment task. The task was composed of seven decision-making problems, six from Kogan and Wallach's (1964) choice dilemmas task and one from the choice dilemmas developed by Stoner (1968). This instrument is frequently employed as a measure of risk versus caution in decision making (e.g., Baron, Dion, Baron, & Miller, 1971; Kogan & Wallach, 1964). We asked participants to imagine themselves in each of these seven situations, in each of which participants faced two possible courses of action. One course of action was more risky but also more rewarding if successful, whereas the other was more secure but less rewarding. For example, one of the situations was described as follows:

You are an electrical engineer, you are married and have one child, and you have been working for a large electronics corporation since graduating from college 5 years ago. You are assured of a lifetime job with a modest, though adequate, salary, and liberal pension benefits upon retirement. On the other hand, it is very unlikely that your salary will increase much before you retire. While attending a convention, you are offered a job with a small, newly founded company which has a highly uncertain future. The new job would pay more to start and would offer the possibility of a share in the ownership if the company survived the competition of the larger firms.

For each decision-making problem, participants rated the advice that the interaction partner would proffer (e.g., 1 = *to stay in the job*, 7 = *to go for the new job*) and then rated what they personally would decide to do (e.g., 1 = *to stay in the job*, 7 = *to go for the new job*). We developed measures of participant risk taking and partner risk taking by averaging scores across the seven problems (high numbers reflect greater risk taking). After completing all seven scenarios, participants also rated instrumentality of the partner (three items; "My partner's advice for each scenario made the judgment task easier";  $\alpha = .79$ ), feeling right (three items; e.g., "Sometimes I felt that my choices could be wrong";  $\alpha = .54$ ), motivation (three items; e.g., "I did my best to make the right choices in the judgment task";  $\alpha = .68$ ), and enjoyment (three items; e.g., "The judgment task was fun to perform";  $\alpha = .78$ ).

Finally, participants described their relationships with their partners. Participants most often described interactions with friends (52%), followed by those with family members (28%), romantic partners (10%), other types of relationships (6%), and coworkers (4%). On average, participants had been involved with their partners for 9.91 years ( $SD = 7.35$ ).

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation check.** Promotion orientation is characterized by risky strategies and eagerness to attain gains, whereas preven-

tion orientation is characterized by conservative strategies and vigilance to avoid losses (Higgins, 1998). Consistent with expectations, we observed a positive correlation between participant risk taking in the decision-making problems and participant regulatory orientation ( $r = .25$ ,  $p = .026$ ). The more the participants were promotion oriented, the more they preferred risky choices. In addition, an independent-samples  $t$  test revealed that participants reported riskier suggestions from promotion-oriented interaction partners ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ) than from prevention-oriented interaction partners ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ),  $t(79) = 4.21$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Key findings.** To test our hypothesis, we regressed each of our criteria simultaneously onto participant regulatory orientation, partner regulatory orientation (1 = promotion-oriented partner, -1 = prevention-oriented partner), and the interaction of these variables. These analyses revealed a main effect of participant orientation for partner instrumentality ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $p = .010$ ). Moreover, and consistent with predictions, these analyses revealed significant interactions of participant orientation with partner orientation for instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .30, .34, .21, and .20, all  $p$ s ranged from .052 to .002). As in previous experiments, simple slope analyses revealed significant or marginal effects of partner regulatory orientation among promotion-oriented participants (1  $SD$  above the mean of participant regulatory orientation scores) for partner instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .27, .54, .41, and .47, all  $p$ s ranged from .087 to .001). And as in previous experiments, the effect of partner regulatory orientation was not significant among prevention-oriented participants (1  $SD$  below mean regulatory orientation) for any of the four criteria ( $\beta$ s ranged from .03 to .18, all  $p$ s ranged from .834 to .255).

**Auxiliary analyses.** To examine whether partner regulatory orientation affected ratings of liking, closeness, and intelligence, we performed an independent-samples  $t$  test. Results revealed no significant difference in liking,  $t(79) = 1.41$ ,  $p = .164$ ; closeness,  $t(79) = 1.29$ ,  $p = .202$ ; or intelligence,  $t(79) = 0.74$ ,  $p = .459$ , between a promotion- and a prevention-oriented partner. When we replicated our key findings controlling for liking, closeness, and intelligence and their interactions with the moderating variables, we found that all the interactions between participant regulatory orientation and partner instrumentality remained significant or marginally significant ( $\beta$ s ranged from .18 to .32, all  $p$ s ranged from .092 to  $< .001$ ).

Thus, even when we provided participants with a task that was explicitly designed to allow for both promotion- and prevention-oriented strategies (i.e., risk taking vs. security seeking), we continued to observe support for the asymmetrical fit hypothesis. Promotion-oriented individuals experience motivational benefits while performing a task with promotion-oriented interaction partners' suggestions in mind. Prevention-oriented individuals are uninfluenced by their interaction partners' regulatory orientations.

## Experiment 4

Three experiments revealed support for the asymmetrical interpersonal fit hypothesis, demonstrating that interpersonal regulatory fit yields motivational benefits for promotion-oriented individuals but not for prevention-oriented individuals. In the previous experiments our samples consisted of convenience samples of university

students. Furthermore, they were asked to imagine and report data about a promotion- or a prevention-oriented partner, but we did not assess the partner's self-report of their own regulatory orientation. In Experiment 4 we gathered data from both partners in ongoing romantic relationships. Each partner reported on his or her regulatory orientation, and each person described the impact of interactions with the partner on his or her personal goal pursuits. Experiment 4 thereby allowed us to examine whether the fit between both partners' regulatory orientation is associated with motivational benefits for each partner in a couple.

## Method

**Participants.** Participants were couples who participated in a survey at Times 3 and 4 of a four-wave longitudinal study. Couples were recruited via the municipalities in which they were married. At Time 3, 185 heterosexual couples participated. The mean age of husbands was 34.07 years ( $SD = 4.86$ ), and the mean age of wives was 31.20 years ( $SD = 4.28$ ). Couples had been romantically involved for an average of 7.71 years ( $SD = 3.03$ ) and had been living together for an average of 5.81 years ( $SD = 2.31$ ). At Time 4, 155 couples participated. As payment for their participation, couples received €15.00 and a pen set (Time 3) or a gift voucher (Time 4).

**Measures and procedure.** Partners in each couple independently completed an extensive questionnaire at home, in the presence of a trained interviewer. The questionnaire took about 90 min to complete. Partners were instructed not to discuss their questions or answers with each other. To assess participant and partner regulatory orientation, both partners completed an eight-item version of the Lockwood et al. (2002) scale (four items for promotion,  $\alpha = .73$ ; four items for prevention,  $\alpha = .64$ ). As in the previous experiments, each participant's predominant orientation was calculated by computing the difference between scores on the Promotion and Prevention subscales. We also assessed perceived instrumentality of the partner (one item; "My partner helps me to become the person that I want to be"), feeling right (one item; "My partner says the right things when I ask him or her for advice"), motivation (one item; "My partner motivates me to accomplish goals and to get things done by means of what he or she says and does"), and enjoyment (one item; "I enjoy receiving suggestions and advice from my partner"). Finally, we assessed intimacy and passion using two subscales of the Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas (2000) Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (three items for intimacy, "How close is your relationship?"; and three items for passion, "How passionate is your relationship?" 1 = *not at all*, 5 = *completely*;  $\alpha$ s = .81 for intimacy and .89 for passion) and commitment using the Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) Investment Model Scale (eight items; "I feel very attached to our relationship—very strongly linked to my partner";  $\alpha = .93$ ).

## Results and Discussion

**Analysis strategy.** We analyzed our data using hierarchical linear modeling (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002), because (a) the data provided by a given participant at two research times are nonindependent and (b) the data provided by two partners in an ongoing relationship are nonindependent. The hierarchical linear modeling technique accounts for the nonindependence of observations by

simultaneously examining variance associated with each level of nesting, thereby providing unbiased hypothesis tests. In our analyses, participant and partner self-report questionnaire measures—data obtained at Times 3 and 4—were nested within participant, and data from the two partners in a given relationship were nested within couple. Following recommended procedures for couples research, we represented intercept terms as random effects and represented slope terms as fixed effects (Kenny, Mannetti, Pierro, Livi, & Kashy, 2002).

**Key findings.** To test our hypothesis, we regressed each of our criteria simultaneously onto participant regulatory orientation, partner regulatory orientation, and the interaction of these variables. These analyses revealed a main effect of participant orientation for instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .07, .10, .10, and .07, all  $ps$  ranged from .006 to .001). Moreover, these analyses revealed significant interactions of participant orientation with partner orientation motivation and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .08 and .05,  $ps$  .009 and .057). The interactions were not significant for instrumentality and feeling right ( $\beta$ s = .03 and .03,  $ps$  .280 and .293).

To examine the nature of the significant interactions for motivation and enjoyment, we performed simple slope analyses. As in previous studies, the effect of partner orientation was significant among promotion-oriented participants (1  $SD$  above the mean of participant regulatory orientation scores) for both motivation and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .18 and .13, both  $ps < .001$ ). On the contrary, the effect of partner regulatory orientation was not significant among prevention-oriented participants (1  $SD$  below mean regulatory orientation;  $\beta$ s = .02 and  $-.01$ ,  $ps$  .642 and .547).

**Auxiliary analyses.** To examine whether partner regulatory orientation affected ratings of intimacy, passion, and commitment, we regressed these variables onto partner regulatory orientation. Results revealed no significant associations between these variables ( $\beta$ s = .01,  $-.03$ , and .01, all  $ps$  ranged from .705 to .419). When we replicated our key findings controlling for intimacy, passion, commitment, and their interactions with the moderating variables, we found that the interactions between participant regulatory orientation and partner orientation for motivation and enjoyment remained significant ( $\beta$ s ranged from .06 to .08, all  $ps$  ranged from .037 to .005). Finally, to explore possible moderation by participant gender, we replicated our key analyses for motivation and enjoyment including main effects and interactions for gender. Results revealed only one main effect of gender; in general women reported greater enjoyment than men ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p = .007$ ). All the other main effects and interactions with gender were nonsignificant ( $\beta$ s ranged from .00 to  $-.06$ , all  $ps$  ranged from .920 to .188).

Once again, we observed support for the asymmetrical fit hypothesis. As in Experiments 1–3, promotion-oriented individuals benefitted from suggestions and advice from their promotion-oriented partners, whereas prevention-oriented individuals did not enjoy commensurate benefit from their prevention-oriented partners. These findings were supported for two of four key criteria—for motivation and enjoyment (but not for instrumentality and feeling right). These results are particularly striking because they show that, at least to a certain extent, our findings extend beyond a within-individual phenomenon. The results obtained using partners' self-reported regulatory orientation were comparable to the

ones obtained in the previous experiments using participants' perception of partners' orientation.

### Experiment 5

Four experiments provide support for the asymmetrical interpersonal fit hypothesis, which predicted that only promotion-oriented individuals are able to benefit from interpersonal fit when receiving help and support from a partner who matches their orientation. Experiment 5 began examining why we observed asymmetrical interpersonal fit. Promotion-oriented individuals are characterized by an explorative processing style (Förster & Higgins, 2005; Friedman & Förster, 2001; Liberman et al., 1999, 2001). Therefore, we predicted that, compared with prevention-oriented individuals, promotion-oriented individuals should be more motivated to seek advice from others and be more receptive to such advice, and, importantly, they should be better at perceiving similarities and recognizing interpersonal fit. On the contrary, prevention-oriented individuals should be so exclusively focused on their own goals that they should be less prone to seek interpersonal assistance and be less receptive to such assistance once it is obtained. Due to this absence of interest in interpersonal support and to the local processing style, prevention-oriented individuals should fail to recognize regulatory similarity and, consequently, should not experience the motivational benefits of interpersonal fit.

Experiment 5 investigated whether promotion- and prevention-oriented individuals (a) differently approach interpersonal support and (b) whether they differ in their judgments of perceived regulatory similarity with promotion- or prevention-oriented partners. We assessed whether individuals of the two orientations differ in the extent to which they seek interpersonal assistance during goal pursuit and the extent to which they are receptive to partners' help and suggestions. Furthermore, we assessed whether individuals of the two orientations differ in perceived regulatory similarity with a partner who shares the same regulatory orientation and whether the perceived regulatory similarity, in turn, allows them to experience

the motivational benefits of interpersonal fit (see model in Figure 3).

### Method

**Participants.** Participants were 87 individuals, 64 women and 23 men. They were recruited on the campus of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and were paid €3.50 for taking part in the experiment. Participants were 20.18 years old, on average ( $SD = 1.79$ ).

**Measures and procedure.** Upon participants' arrival at the laboratory, we randomly assigned them to one of two experimental conditions (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented partner). Participants sat in cubicles facing computer screens that presented the experiment and registered the data. First, participants completed the Lockwood et al. (2002) scale to assess their regulatory orientation ( $\alpha_s = .82$  for promotion and  $.81$  for prevention). As in the previous experiments, each participant's predominant orientation was calculated by computing the difference between scores on the Promotion and Prevention subscales. As in Experiment 3, then we asked participants to think about either a promotion-oriented or a prevention-oriented interaction partner (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented partner).

After participants reported the name of a suitable interaction partner, they described the type of relationship they had with that person. Paralleling procedures of Experiments 1, 2, and 3, participants also rated partner liking, partner closeness, and partner intelligence. Moreover, they rated partner regulatory orientation using the eight items employed in Experiments 1 and 2 ( $\alpha_s = .79$  for promotion and  $.71$  for prevention). The partner's predominant orientation was calculated by computing the difference between scores on the Promotion and Prevention subscales. As in Experiment 1, we asked participants to report three self-relevant goals and, for each of these three goals, to rate instrumentality of the partner (three items; "\_\_\_\_\_ is really instrumental and helpful for the accomplishment of this goal";  $\alpha = .90$ ), feeling right (three

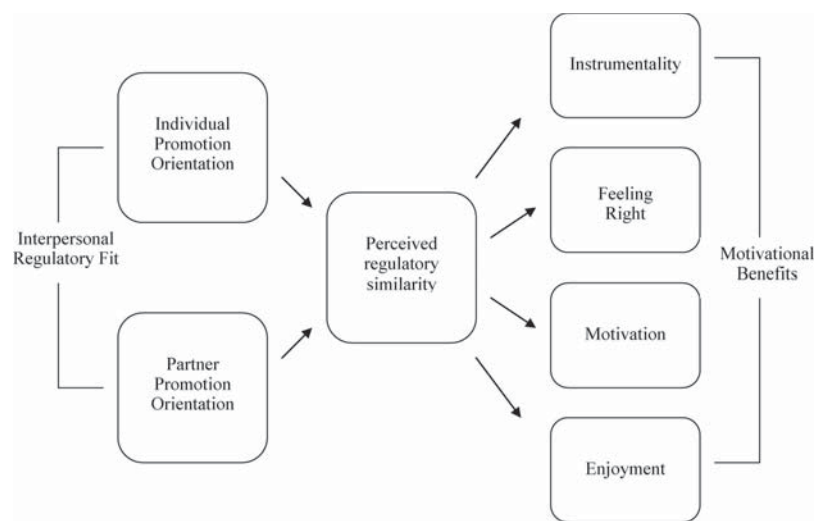


Figure 3. Perceived regulatory similarity mediates the association between two promotion-oriented individuals and the motivational benefits, Experiment 5.

items; “I feel right about what I am doing to accomplish this goal after receiving \_\_\_\_\_’s suggestions and advice”;  $\alpha = .91$ ), motivation (three items; “With his suggestions and advice \_\_\_\_\_ is really able to motivate me in accomplishing this goal”;  $\alpha = .86$ ), and enjoyment (three items; “I enjoy the pursuit of this goal more after receiving \_\_\_\_\_’s advice and suggestions”;  $\alpha = .90$ ). We developed a single measure of each construct by averaging relevant scores across the three goals described by a given participant. Finally, to investigate the mechanisms responsible for the asymmetrical fit findings, we asked participants to rate suggestion seeking (three items; “I seek help from \_\_\_\_\_ when I want to accomplish something”;  $\alpha = .84$ ), suggestion receptivity (three items; “I really care and pay attention to the suggestions and advice that \_\_\_\_\_ gives me”;  $\alpha = .90$ ), and perceived regulatory similarity with the partner (three items; e.g., “I think that \_\_\_\_\_ and I have a similar approach to goals”;  $\alpha = .86$ ).

Participants also described the type of relationship they had with the partner as well as the duration of their relationship. Participants most often described interactions with friends (50%), followed by those with family members (32%), romantic partners (10%), other types of relationships (6%), and coworkers (2%). On average, participants had been involved with their partners for 3.44 years ( $SD = 6.22$ ).

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation check.** To examine the effectiveness of our manipulation of partner regulatory orientation, we performed an independent-samples *t* test (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented partner) on the difference score measure of partner regulatory orientation. This analysis confirmed that participants in the promotion-oriented partner condition rated the partner as more promotion oriented ( $M = 0.70$ ,  $SD = 0.21$ ) than did participants in the prevention-oriented partner condition ( $M = -0.80$ ,  $SD = 0.22$ ),  $t(85) = 4.97$ ,  $p < .001$ . These results suggest that our manipulation of partner regulatory orientation was effective.

**Key findings.** To test our hypothesis, we regressed partner instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment, in turn, simultaneously onto participant regulatory orientation, partner regulatory orientation (1 = promotion-oriented partner, -1 = prevention-oriented partner), and the interaction of these variables. These analyses revealed significant or marginal main effects of participant orientation for instrumentality and feeling right (respectively,  $\beta_s = .19$  and  $.21$ ,  $ps = .060$  and  $.041$ ). Importantly, the interaction of participant orientation with partner orientation was significant or marginal for instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\beta_s = .29$ ,  $.27$ ,  $.22$ , and  $.20$ , all  $ps$  ranged from .064 to .006).

To examine the nature of these interactions, we performed simple slope analyses for each criterion. The effect of partner orientation was significant among promotion-oriented participants (1  $SD$  above the mean of participant regulatory orientation scores) for partner instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\beta_s = .37$ ,  $.38$ ,  $.34$ , and  $.37$ , all  $ps$  ranged from .032 to .011). In contrast, the effect of partner orientation was not significant among prevention-oriented participants (1  $SD$  below mean regulatory orientation) for any of the four criteria ( $\beta_s$  ranged from  $-.07$  to  $-.21$ , all  $ps$  ranged from .626 to .150).

**Reasons for fit.** To test the relationship between the individual’s regulatory orientation and the openness to interpersonal support, we regressed suggestion seeking and suggestion receptivity simultaneously onto participant regulatory orientation, partner regulatory orientation, and the interaction of these variables. These analyses revealed a significant main effect of participant orientation, in that the more participants were promotion oriented (vs. prevention oriented), the more they reported seeking others’ help and support ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p = .012$ ) and being receptive to this kind of interpersonal assistance ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p = .044$ ). The interaction of participant orientation with partner orientation was not significant ( $\beta_s = .12$  and  $.14$ ,  $ps = .243$  and  $.186$ ).

To test whether perceived regulatory similarity is the mechanism responsible for the experience of the four motivational benefits, we performed a mediated moderation analysis (Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). First, we regressed perceived regulatory similarity simultaneously onto participant regulatory orientation, partner regulatory orientation, and the interaction of these variables. This analysis revealed a significant main effect of participant orientation and a significant interaction between partner regulatory orientation and participant regulatory orientation (respectively,  $\beta_s = .20$  and  $.33$ ,  $ps = .054$  and  $.001$ ). Simple slope analyses revealed that the effect of partner regulatory orientation was significant among promotion-oriented participants ( $\beta = .45$ ,  $p = .001$ ) but not among prevention-oriented participants ( $\beta = -.17$ ,  $p = .219$ ). Thus, only promotion-oriented individuals could recognize similarity in their goal pursuit approach with promotion-oriented interaction partners. Second, we regressed the four motivational benefits onto participant regulatory orientation, partner regulatory orientation, perceived regulatory similarity, the interaction between participant and partner regulatory orientation, and the interaction between partner regulatory orientation and perceived regulatory similarity. These analyses revealed a significant main effect of perceived regulatory similarity on partner instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\beta_s = .52$ ,  $.58$ ,  $.54$ , and  $.61$ , all  $ps < .001$ ), whereas all the interactions between participant and partner regulatory orientation became nonsignificant ( $\beta_s = .11$ ,  $.07$ ,  $.03$ , and  $-.01$ , all  $ps$  ranged from .268 to .910).

**Auxiliary analyses.** To examine whether partner regulatory orientation affected liking, closeness, and intelligence, we performed an independent-samples *t* test. Results revealed no significant difference in liking,  $t(85) = 0.84$ ,  $p = .406$ ; closeness,  $t(85) = -0.27$ ,  $p = .707$ ; or intelligence,  $t(85) = 0.05$ ,  $p = .906$ , between a promotion- and a prevention-oriented partner. When we replicated our key findings controlling for liking, closeness, and intelligence and their interactions with the moderating variables, we found that all the interactions between participant regulatory orientation and partner instrumentality remained significant or marginally significant ( $\beta_s$  ranged from .17 to .30, all  $ps$  ranged from .086 to .004), except for enjoyment when controlling for closeness ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p = .135$ ).

Experiment 5 replicated the asymmetrical fit findings observed in the previous experiments. Extending these results, Experiment 5 begins to shed light on why we observed asymmetrical fit for motivational benefits. Promotion-oriented individuals tend to seek more help and suggestions from others and to be more receptive to suggestions (regardless of the partner’s regulatory orientation) than prevention-oriented individuals. Furthermore, promotion-oriented individuals recognize that they have a similar approach to



goals as promotion-oriented partners, and this perceived regulatory similarity leads to the experience of motivational benefits. Prevention-oriented individuals fail to recognize similarity with prevention-oriented partners.

### Experiment 6

Given the role of perceived regulatory similarity in explaining the asymmetrical effects of interpersonal fit, in Experiment 6 we sought to replicate the findings of Experiment 5 with a different measure of perceived regulatory similarity. In this experiment, participants listed all suggestions that they could receive from an interaction partner that were similar to their own approach to goals. We predicted that, if promotion-oriented people are open and receptive to interpersonal suggestions, they should also be able to detect which suggestions are similar to their own way of approaching goals and report more similar suggestions from a promotion-oriented partner than from a prevention-oriented partner. In turn, this measure of perceived regulatory similarity should be the mediator for the experienced motivational benefits. Furthermore, we assessed whether the two regulatory orientations differed in their openness to external information and value of others' suggestions while pursuing a goal, and, as in Experiment 5, in the amount of interpersonal assistance that is sought during goal pursuit and their receptivity to partners' help and suggestions.

### Method

**Participants.** Participants were 89 individuals, 52 women and 37 men. They were recruited on the campus of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and were paid € 3.50 for taking part in the experiment. Participants were 21.15 years old, on average ( $SD = 4.76$ ).

**Measures and procedure.** Upon participants' arrival at the laboratory, we randomly assigned them to one of two experimental conditions (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented partner). Participants sat in separate cubicles facing computers. First, participants completed the Lockwood et al. (2002) Promotion/Prevention Scale ( $\alpha$ s = .84 for promotion and .76 for prevention); their predominant orientation was calculated by computing the difference between scores on the Promotion and Prevention subscales. We also assessed their openness to external information while pursuing a goal (three items; "When I try to solve a problem, I look around for anything that can help me with it";  $\alpha = .75$ ) and value of others' suggestions (three items; "Thanks to other people's advice I can reach an optimal solution for my problems";  $\alpha = .80$ ).

As in Experiments 3 and 5, then we asked participants to think of either a promotion-oriented or a prevention-oriented interaction partner (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented partner). After reporting the name of a suitable interaction partner, they answered some questions about him or her. We assessed liking, closeness, intelligence, and regulatory orientation as in the previous experiments. Additionally, we assessed partners' competence (one item; "How competent is this person?"), successfulness (one item; "How successful is this person?"), and industriousness (one item; "How hardworking is this person?"). Subsequently, we informed participants that the experiment investigated how other people may influence goal accomplishment. We asked them to describe a self-relevant goal and to list all the suggestions that the partner

could give them about pursuing this goal. We specifically asked them to report only the suggestions that were similar to their own approach to the goal, as a way to measure perceived regulatory similarity in goal pursuit. Subsequently, we asked participants to visualize their partner giving them suggestions to pursue that goal, and as in Experiment 5, we assessed instrumentality of the partner, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment ( $\alpha$ s = .83, .83, .83, and .85). Finally, to investigate the mechanisms responsible for the asymmetrical fit findings, participants rated suggestion seeking (three items; "I seek help from \_\_\_\_\_ when I want to accomplish something";  $\alpha = .87$ ) and suggestion receptivity (three items; "I really care and pay attention to the suggestions and advice that \_\_\_\_\_ gives me";  $\alpha = .72$ ).

Participants also described the type of relationship they had with the partner as well as the duration of their relationship. Participants most often described interactions with friends (38%), followed by those with family members (36%), romantic partners (16%), other types of relationships (7%), and coworkers (3%). On average, participants had been involved with their partners for 4.16 years ( $SD = 6.69$ ).

### Results and Discussion

**Manipulation check.** An independent-samples *t* test (promotion- vs. prevention-oriented partner) confirmed that participants in the promotion-oriented partner condition rated the partner as more promotion oriented ( $M = 0.71$ ,  $SD = 0.19$ ) than did participants in the prevention-oriented partner condition ( $M = -0.68$ ,  $SD = 0.19$ ),  $t(87) = 5.15$ ,  $p < .001$ . These results suggest that our manipulation of partner regulatory orientation was effective.

**Key findings.** Regression analyses revealed significant or marginal main effects of participant orientation for instrumentality, feeling right, motivation, and enjoyment (respectively,  $\beta$ s = .20, .22, .26, and .17, all *ps* ranged from .086 to .013). Importantly, the interaction of participant orientation with partner orientation was significant or marginal for instrumentality, feeling right, and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .26, .26, and .29, all *ps* ranged from .012 to .005). The interaction was not significant for motivation ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p = .282$ ).

To examine the nature of these interactions, we performed simple slope analyses for each criterion. The effect of partner orientation was significant among promotion-oriented participants (1 *SD* above the mean of participant regulatory orientation scores) for partner instrumentality, feeling right, and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .28, .36, and .53, all *ps* ranged from .052 to  $<.001$ ). The effect of partner orientation was marginally significant among prevention-oriented participants (1 *SD* below mean regulatory orientation) for instrumentality ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p = .098$ ) but not for feeling right and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = -.16 and  $-.05$ , *ps* = .268 and .749).

**Reasons for fit.** Correlation analyses revealed that the more participants were promotion oriented, the more they reported being open to external information while pursuing a goal ( $r = .45$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the more they reported valuing others' suggestions for goal accomplishment ( $r = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As in Experiment 5, regression analyses revealed a significant main effect of participant orientation, in that the more participants were promotion oriented (vs. prevention oriented), the more they reported seeking others' help and support ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $p = .012$ ) and being receptive

to this kind of interpersonal assistance ( $\beta = .21, p = .048$ ). The interaction of participant orientation with partner orientation was not significant ( $\beta$ s = .16 and .07,  $p$ s = .129 and .515).

As in Experiment 5, to test whether perceived regulatory similarity is the mechanism responsible for the experience of the three significant motivational benefits (instrumentality, feeling right, and enjoyment), we performed a mediated moderation analysis (Muller et al., 2005). First, we regressed perceived regulatory similarity simultaneously onto participant regulatory orientation, partner regulatory orientation, and the interaction of these variables. This analysis revealed a significant main effect of participant orientation and a marginally significant interaction of partner regulatory orientation with participant regulatory orientation (respectively,  $\beta$ s = .26 and .20,  $p$ s = .013 and .059). Simple slope analyses revealed that the effect of partner regulatory orientation was significant among promotion-oriented participants ( $\beta = .33, p = .023$ ) but not among prevention-oriented participants ( $\beta = -.06, p = .678$ ). Second, we regressed the three motivational benefits onto participant regulatory orientation, partner regulatory orientation, perceived regulatory similarity, the interaction between participant and partner regulatory orientation, and the interaction between partner regulatory orientation and perceived fit. These analyses revealed a significant main effect of perceived regulatory similarity on partner instrumentality, feeling right, and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .35, .30, .23,  $p$ s ranged from .034 to .001), whereas the interaction between participant and partner regulatory orientation was reduced in magnitude for instrumentality and enjoyment ( $\beta$ s = .20 and .21,  $p$ s = .077 and .065) and was not significant for feeling right ( $\beta = .18, p = .109$ ).

**Auxiliary analyses.** To examine whether partner regulatory orientation affected liking, closeness, intelligence, competence, successfulness, and industriousness, we performed an independent-samples *t* test. Results revealed no significant difference in liking,  $t(87) = 0.25, p = .803$ ; closeness,  $t(87) = 1.16, p = .250$ ; intelligence,  $t(87) = 1.23, p = .205$ ; competence,  $t(87) = 1.35, p = .179$ ; and successfulness,  $t(87) = 1.10, p = .277$ , between a promotion- and a prevention-oriented partner. On the contrary, prevention-oriented partners were rated as more hardworking ( $M = 5.44, SD = 0.16$ ) than promotion-oriented partners ( $M = 4.72, SD = 0.16$ ),  $t(87) = 3.22, p = .002$ . When we replicated our key findings controlling for liking, closeness, intelligence, competence, successfulness, and productivity and their interactions with the moderating variables, we found that all the interactions between participant regulatory orientation and partner instrumentality remained significant or marginally significant ( $\beta$ s ranged from .17 to .30, all  $p$ s ranged from .078 to .001).

As in the previous studies, only promotion-oriented individuals experienced greater motivational benefits in an interaction with promotion-oriented partners. Furthermore, promotion-oriented individuals tended to be more open to external information while pursuing a goal and to better appreciate others' advice as a tool to reach optimal solutions than prevention-oriented individuals. As in Experiment 5, promotion-oriented individuals tended to seek more help and suggestions from others and to be more receptive to suggestions (regardless of partners' regulatory orientation) than prevention-oriented individuals. Finally, promotion-oriented individuals were aware of interpersonal fit and reported more similar suggestions when asked to think about suggestions from a promotion-oriented partner than suggestions from a prevention-

oriented partner. Perceived regulatory similarity emerged as the mediator for the motivational benefits experienced by promotion-oriented individuals. On the contrary, prevention-oriented individuals did not differ in the amount of similar suggestions reported from a promotion- or a prevention-oriented other.

## General Discussion

The present research explored regulatory fit as an interpersonal phenomenon, examining how individual goal pursuit is affected by advice and suggestions received from an interaction partner whose orientation is perceived to fit (vs. not fit) the individual's orientation. We anticipated that interpersonal fit would yield the same motivational benefits as intrapersonal fit (e.g., feeling right, enhanced motivation). We investigated whether interpersonal fit yields symmetrical benefits for promotion- and prevention-oriented individuals (i.e., the symmetrical fit hypothesis) versus whether interpersonal fit yields asymmetrical benefits, promoting goal pursuit among promotion-oriented individuals but not among prevention-oriented individuals (i.e., the asymmetrical fit hypothesis). Furthermore, we investigated whether the two orientations have a different approach to interpersonal assistance and whether this may influence the judgment of perceived regulatory similarity in goal orientation.

Data from six experiments revealed support for the asymmetrical fit hypothesis. Promotion-oriented individuals (but not prevention-oriented individuals) described instrumental interaction partners as more promotion oriented than noninstrumental partners (Experiment 1). Promotion-oriented individuals (but not prevention-oriented individuals) described promotion-oriented interaction partners as more instrumental than prevention-oriented partners, and after receiving advice from promotion-oriented partners, reported feeling right about their goal pursuits, exhibited high motivation, and experienced high enjoyment (Experiments 2, 3, 4, and 5). Among prevention-oriented individuals, these motivational benefits were in no case significantly affected by their interaction partner's regulatory orientation. Furthermore, when pursuing a goal, promotion-oriented individuals, compared with prevention-oriented individuals, reported seeking more interpersonal advice and being more receptive to it (Experiments 5 and 6). They were also more open to any useful external information in the environment and valued other people's suggestions more (Experiment 6) than prevention-oriented individuals. Finally, only promotion-oriented individuals recognized fit to goal approach with a promotion-oriented partner, and this mediated the effects on the motivational benefits (Experiments 5 and 6). Prevention-oriented individuals failed to recognize regulatory fit with a prevention-oriented partner.

We also examined whether people perceived promotion- and prevention-oriented partners differently. Across experiments, no differences emerged between promotion- and prevention-oriented partners for liking, closeness, intelligence, competence, or success. However, Experiment 6 indicated that prevention-oriented partners are perceived as more hardworking than promotion-oriented partners. This is probably due to the fact that prevention-oriented individuals carry out tasks in a careful and meticulous way that may be interpreted as a signal of hard work and industriousness. Finally, to ensure the validity of our findings, we also replicated

our key analyses controlling for these relational and motivational variables.

### Implications and Future Research

People do not pursue goals in a social vacuum; rather, they are surrounded by interaction partners with the potential to influence and support their goal accomplishment. Thus far, numerous experiments have investigated regulatory fit as an intrapersonal phenomenon (Förster, Grant, Idson, & Higgins, 2001; Förster et al., 1998; Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Freitas, Liberman, & Higgins, 2002; Higgins, 2000; Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2004; Shah et al., 1998). Our research investigated regulatory fit as an interpersonal phenomenon. We extended the literature regarding the motivational benefits of intrapersonal fit by demonstrating that when interacting individuals perceive they share a promotion orientation, they experience fit and enjoy its motivational benefits.

The present work also extends previous research demonstrating that close partners can shape individual goal pursuit (Chartrand, Dalton, & Fitzsimons, 2007; Drigotas et al., 1999; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003; Shah, 2003). Close others represent a powerful source of social influence because close relationships are characterized by high levels of interdependence and by frequent and powerful interactions. Close partners may shape the types of goals that an individual pursues, they may influence the individual's success in the pursuit of these goals, and they may affect the individual's motivation to achieve these goals. The present research focuses on the motivational aspect of goal pursuit, identifying an important interpersonal property (interpersonal regulatory fit) that can exert a particularly powerful impact on the individual's goal pursuits.

Importantly, our experiments consistently revealed that in the context of goal support, interpersonal fit differs from intrapersonal fit with respect to the symmetry of the effects for promotion and prevention orientation. When a person tries to accomplish goals with the assistance of an interaction partner, fit between the two individuals' promotion orientations yields motivational benefits for goal pursuit, whereas fit between the two individuals' prevention orientations has no motivational benefits. Our experiments showed that prevention-oriented individuals do not recognize the similarity between their approach to goals and that of a prevention-oriented partner, thereby decreasing the likelihood of experiencing the benefits of interpersonal fit. Prevention-oriented individuals have a local processing style (Förster & Higgins, 2005) that may limit their search for and receptivity to interpersonal support. This may prevent them from elaborating the partner's input and, therefore, prevent them from recognizing similarity in goal orientation. Furthermore, the local processing style linked to prevention orientation might facilitate the perception of dissimilarities (Förster, 2009; Förster et al., 2008) in evaluating a social object (Righetti et al., 2011). However, there are at least two other factors that might play a role in this failure to recognize and experience fit.

We reasoned that prevention-oriented individuals do not seek advice and suggestions from others because they are focused on the problem at hand and they are not open to external information. Alternatively, prevention-oriented individuals may inhibit the tendency to seek interpersonal support because they fear rejection by others. In line with this hypothesis is the finding that prevention-oriented individuals tend to be particularly sensitive to cues that

signal social threat (Keller, Hurst, & Uskul, 2008; Oyserman et al., 2007), such that they frequently withdraw from others, inhibiting their social behaviors (Ayduk, May, Downey, & Higgins, 2003; Brebels & De Cremer, 2008; Murray et al., 2008; Oyserman et al., 2007). It is assumed that such behavior serves to diminish threats to social connections and to prevent social exclusion.

Furthermore, prevention-oriented individuals might experience high levels of social anxiety because they are preoccupied with acceptance and rejection by others (Keller et al., 2008; Oyserman et al., 2007). Social anxiety might interfere with their receptivity to others' suggestions. In fact, socially anxious thoughts and preoccupations may obstruct the processing of information provided by an interaction partner and may hinder the capacity for *self-compatibility checking*. Self-compatibility checking is a self-regulatory process through which people access the self system to determine whether external "objects" are compatible with self-relevant information, such as personal motives or emotional preferences (Kazén, Baumann, & Kuhl, 2003). This process is probably necessary for individuals to experience interpersonal regulatory fit.

Previous research found a relation between promotion orientation and independent self-construal and between prevention orientation and interdependent self-construal (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000). Nevertheless, our work revealed that, when pursuing self-relevant goals, promotion-oriented individuals are oriented toward the social environment, whereas the opposite is true for prevention-oriented individuals. We believe that in a self-oriented context, such as the pursuit of self-relevant goals, the global processing style of promotion-oriented individuals elicits attendance to the social environment as a tool to attain self-nurturance and self-growth. Thus, promotion-oriented individuals can focus on the social domain to the extent that this is instrumental for the self. On the contrary, in a self-oriented context, the local processing style of prevention-oriented individuals elicits a self-focus to avoid interferences with their goals and maintain security.

Future research should investigate whether prevention-oriented individuals are able to experience interpersonal regulatory fit when they pursue goals in an interdependent context rather than in a self-oriented context. Kühnen and Hannover (2010; see also Förster & Dannenberg, 2010) argued that inducing a prevention focus among people with an independent self-construal (or in an independent context) elicits a local processing style but that inducing a prevention focus among people with an interdependent self-construal (or in an interdependent context) might elicit global processing. In our work, we did not consider interdependent goals—goals that are common to both partners and that both individuals pursue together (e.g., going on a vacation together). For interdependent goals, consideration of the interaction partner's point of view would seem to be a *sine qua non* for successful goal accomplishment. As such, it seems plausible that for interdependent goals, prevention-oriented individuals may be as sensitive to interpersonal fit as promotion-oriented individuals.

The various manipulations and measurements that we used in our experiments suggest that our findings are robust and likely to generalize to diverse types of close relationships. Our findings therefore have implications for diverse domains in everyday life, including educational, work, and romantic settings. In general, encouraging promotion orientation in individuals may create the conditions necessary for interpersonal interactions to contribute to

goal pursuit activities in instrumental ways. Thus, whenever it is desirable that an interaction be motivating and helpful for the individual's goal accomplishment (e.g., in the context of employer–employee or teacher–pupil relationships), stimulating promotion orientation in the two individuals may well be desirable. Although the combination promotion–promotion seems to be the best option for the acquisition of motivational strength, it does not necessarily translate into outstanding performance. Stimulating a promotion orientation should elicit openness and receptivity to interpersonal support. But when people are accomplishing a prevention task, a prevention-oriented partner, although not very motivating, might be functional for optimal achievement. Future research should then investigate under which circumstances regulatory similarity or complementarity is predictive of goal success, whether this translates into relationship satisfaction, whether people assimilate or take distance from the partner orientation, and whether promotion- and prevention-oriented individuals react differently to these types of processes.

### Strengths and Limitations

Before closing, we should acknowledge several strengths and limitations of the present work. One limitation is that in most of our experiments, participants reported on prior experiences in which they pursued individual goals in the presence of an interaction partner; only Experiment 3 examined actual task-relevant behaviors. Furthermore, most of our experiments were based on visualization tasks and relied on participants' perception of their partner's orientation. Our work showed that the mechanism responsible for the experience of motivational benefit is perceived regulatory similarity and that this mechanism relies on the perception of the partner's orientation. However, we believe that the individual's perception of the partner's orientation is, to a certain extent, anchored in reality. Experiment 4 provided preliminary support for this idea, because two of the four motivational benefits were found to be experienced by promotion individuals when the partner's regulatory orientation was reported by the partner him- or herself. Future research should address to what extent and under which circumstances the individual's perception of the partner's orientation is accurate or biased.

Another limitation rests on the fact that all six experiments employed participants from a Western culture characterized by independent selves. Especially in light of the possible different impacts of regulatory orientation and self-construal on global/local processing style (Förster & Dannenberg, 2010; Kühnen & Hannover, 2010), future research should examine interpersonal regulatory fit in an interdependent culture.

Finally, five of the six experiments used the Lockwood et al. (2002) instrument to assess individual regulatory orientation; only Experiment 2 examined situationally induced regulatory orientation. Despite our counterarguments regarding the Summerville and Roese (2008) claims (see footnote 1), we grant that our findings may be particularly relevant to the approach and positive affect aspect of promotion and/or to the avoidance and negative affect aspect of prevention. Indeed, although we examined interpersonal regulatory fit based on promotion/prevention focus, the phenomenon of interpersonal fit may also occur for other motivational variables, such as approach/avoidance (for a review, see Carver, 1996) or assessment/locomotion (Kruglanski et al., 2000).

Several strengths of this work should also be acknowledged. The occurrence of interpersonal fit for promotion-oriented individuals has been replicated in six different experiments using diverse research methods. We examined individual regulatory orientation and partner orientation not only by measuring these constructs but also by manipulating them; we explored partner orientation both as an independent variable and as a dependent variable; and we used both self-report questionnaires and laboratory tasks to assess the benefits of fit. Furthermore, we observed the benefits of interpersonal fit for promotion-oriented individuals in diverse types of relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, and familial relations, strengthening the ecological validity of our results. And finally, the consequences of interpersonal fit revealed in our experiments were purely motivational and were not confounded with other interpersonal constructs (i.e., liking or closeness to the other) or with potentially relevant features of the interaction partner (i.e., intelligence, competence, successfulness, and productivity).

### Conclusion

When people pursue goals they are surrounded by others who can exert considerable influence on their goal accomplishment. Our work illuminates when and why an interpersonal interaction can be beneficial and instrumental for the individual's goal accomplishment. Results from six experiments revealed that when both the individual and an interaction partner are promotion oriented, their interaction is particularly motivating for the individual's goal pursuits. Thus, our findings contribute to the literature regarding regulatory fit in goal pursuit, highlighting the fact that this phenomenon can be experienced in an interpersonal context. Nevertheless, for interpersonal regulatory fit, promotion orientation dominates the stage: It is promotion-oriented individuals (and not prevention-oriented individuals) who recognize and enjoy the motivational benefits of interpersonal regulatory fit for individual goal accomplishment.

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